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Dean Logan's Blog

Students in RWU Immigration Clinic Notch Important Wins for Clients

Posted by David Logan on 05/06/2014 at 04:17 PM

A signature program at RWU law is our Immigration Clinic, where upper-level students get hands-on experience representing clients trying to navigate the incredibly complex immigration system. Building on past successes <http://law.rwu.edu/blog/rwu-law-students-impact-lives-experiential-learning-opportunities>, Clinic Director (and RWU law alum) Deb Gonzalez and her students continue to seek and obtain justice for the vulnerable among us.

Here are nutshells of two recent victories and below that are pictures of some of our successful student advocates and their teacher.

First case: The client is a Chinese national who married a first generation Dominican. When they arrive in the U.S., he began to mistreat her and although she was pregnant she was forced into temporarily homelessness. Students Christopher Young, James Collie Glisson, Tracy Harper, and Kristen Bonjour gathered police and medical reports to prove her homelessness, and had help translating documents from Chinese to English (Zoe Zhang), to prove the relationship, in order to apply for classification as a battered spouse of a United States Citizen (USC), also known as a VAWA (Violence Against Women Act). Students filed a petition seeking this desirable immigration classification and based on their hard work, the client can now obtain lawful permanent residence.

Second case: The client is a Guatemalan national – living in the U.S. for over 14 years – who married a woman and has 2 kids with the woman. They live together as a family when the wife begins to communicate with an incarcerated man, telling the client that he is “her uncle.” After release, the man comes to live with the family and she allows him to move into her bedroom. Several months pass and the husband figures out that the roommate was not in fact a relative. The Immigration Clinic had been representing the client on an asylum petition in the hopes of obtaining a cancellation of removal, when he revealed his concerns about the interloper to student attorney Dominique Tonacchio, who ran the “uncle’s” name through public records and determined that the guest was a convicted pedophile on probation. The student attorneys (Dominique plus Amanda Corsaro) filed a VAWA claim based on the emotional distress created by forcing him and his children to live with a convicted pedophile. The U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Service granted the battered spouse classification, which will enable the client to obtain lawful permanent residence in the U.S.

These were especially difficult cases, because the students had no psychological reports to prove the abuse, but they used their ingenuity to come up with evidence to establish the emotional abuse suffered. The great news is that both clients are well on their way to Lawful Permanent Residence!



Amanda Corsaro (2L), Immigration Clinic Director Deborah Gonzalez '07, and Chris Young (3L)



Deborah Gonzalez and James “Collie” Glisson (3L)